REMARKS

On the various

INTERPRETATIONS

OF THE

More ſure Word of Prophecy, 2 Pet. 1. 19.

WHICH

Have been lately publiſhed by the Dean of CHICHESTER, and the Author of *Miſcellanea Sacra*.

IN

VINDICATION

OF THAT

Paſſage from the OBJECTIONS of the Author of a Diſcourſe, of, *The Grounds and Reaſons of the Chriſtian Religion*.

With a

Different Account of the Place deſigned; in VINDICATION of it againſt the mentioned Author.

LONDON,

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REMARKS

ON THE ANTIQUITY

OF THE

INTERPRETATION

OF

APOCALYPSE XIII. 18.

WHICH

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BY DEAN OF CHICHESTER, AND THE

AUTHOR OF MISCELLANEOUS TRACTS.

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THE Author of a Diſcourſe of the *Grounds and Reaſons of the Chriſtian Religion*, hath taken Occaſion, from 2 *Pet. Chap.* 1. to raiſe an Objection (in his Way) againſt the *ſacred Writer*, and the *Chriſtian Revelation*: And the whole Paſſage of the Apoſtle *Peter*, from whence the Objection is taken, is in *ver.* 16, 17, 18, 19. and it ſtands thus; *For*

we have not followed cunningly devis'd Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty: For he received from God the Father, Honour and Glory, when there came such a Voice to him, from the excellent Glory; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice, which came from Heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy Mount. We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto, ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your Hearts.

The *Word of Prophecy*, in this Place, hath been generally refer'd to the Old Testament; but then will it not appear very strange and weak in the Apostle, to talk of an *Old Testament Prophecy*, being a *more sure Evidence* of Christianity, than the Divine Vision and Voice, *seen and heard by himself*, and others; which are related in *ver.* 16, 17, 18.

To remove this *Difficulty*, some learned Men have lately published their various Interpretations of the Place.

And among those, the very worthy Bishop deserves to be first named, who hath written to excellent Purpose, against the Au-

Author of *Grounds and Reaſons.* —— But this learned Writer's Account of the Paſſage, under Conſideration, does not ſeem to be fully ſatisfactory. He begins his *Defence of Chriſtianity* with endeavouring to clear up the *more ſure Word of Prophecy*, which he refers to the Old Teſtament: and in this I have the Honour of being in the ſame Opinion with his Lordſhip. But to get rid of the *Difficulty*. —— He compares the *Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19. with the *deviſ'd Fables*, ver. 16. and indeed, it is very evident, that Old Teſtament Prophecy is *more ſure*, than *deviſ'd Fables*; but what I fear is, that in ſubduing one *Difficulty*, this great Author hath raiſed up another; for to ſay the Word of Prophecy is *more ſure*, than a deviſed Fable, is to ſpeak a very mean Thing in favour of the *Word of Prophecy*, as an *Evidence* of Chriſtianity: It ſeems to me, that the Word of Prophecy is ſet in no advantageous Light by ſuch a Compariſon.

However, the learned Biſhop is not ſingular in comparing the *more ſure Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19. with the *deviſ'd Fables*, ver. 16. for *Glaſſius* mentions it in his *Philologia Sacra*, Page 428. as one of the Ways of accounting for *2 Pet.* 1, 16—19.

I proceed now to consider what a learned Dean hath offer'd upon the difficult Place. He hath made 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. the Text of several Discourses; published with a View to the Author of *Grounds and Reasons*—— and against whom he hath done very good Service. And though I am forced to differ from so able and ingenious a Writer in his first Discourse; yet I have found much Entertainment, and Instruction in the other Five. His justly admired Learning and Wit, and great Application to his Subject, are very conspicuous; and by means of these, and other fine Qualities, what he writes is read with Pleasure.

But my Business is to see, how happy he hath been in clearing up his Text and Context. This Author mentions several ways, wherein the Passage hath been understood, and by which the *Difficulty* attending it, hath been accounted for; but for one Reason or other, he rejects them: It may be observ'd, that he takes no Notice of that Account of the Place, which the learned Bishop hath proposed in his Defence of Christianity.

The Dean's Interpretation of the Place, so far as I know, is perfectly new; but no matter for that, if it be perfectly right.

'Tis evident, he ſets about clearing up the Paſſage in a very proper Way, *i. e.* by conſidering what the Apoſtle intended to prove: *To clear this Matter*, ſays he, *let us conſider what it is, that St.* Peter *intended to prove*, Page 14. and that we may the better underſtand the Point to be proved; he well obſerves, in Page 15. that the *ſecond Epiſtle of St.* Peter *was written to ſupport the Hopes, which he had raiſed in his firſt.*

But before the Dean tells us what St. *Peter* intended to prove; he is pleaſed to ſay, what is not deſigned to be proved: He asks, Page 14. *Is it the Truth of the Goſpel?* and makes anſwer in theſe Words, *nothing leſs*: This is ſoon ſaid, but ſhould have been well proved; for the Point is very material. However, the Dean, in effect, affirms, that the proving the Truth of the Goſpel was moſt remote from the Deſign of St. *Peter*, in his two Epiſtles. Now it happens, that Things appear to me juſt contrary; and therefore I'll ſhew, that it is the Goſpel in one, or other *principal Doctrine* of it, which St. *Peter* intended to prove. The truly ſtating what is intended to be proved, is very neceſſary, in order to a right Account of the Dean's Text.

This Apoſtle does *bleſs God, who according to his abundant Mercy, had begotten Chri-*

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Chriſtians to a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, 1 Ep. 1. 3. and the great Happineſs hoped for, is an *Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for them*, ver. 4. it follows, *who are kept by the Power of God, through Faith into Salvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt Time*, ver. 5. As *Salvation*, in this Verſe, is plainly a future Thing, ſo it is the *moſt future Bleſſing*; becauſe it was to be *revealed in the laſt Time*; it is then the ſame Bleſſing with the *Inheritance*, ver. 4. and the Matter, or Object of the *lively Hope*, ver. 3. In *ver.* 6. the Apoſtle puts them in Mind, how much they did rejoyce in the Hope of the final and heavenly Salvation, *wherein*, ſays he, *ye greatly rejoyce*.—In *ver.* 7. He ſhews them, that the preſent *Trial of their Faith* would be found to *Praiſe, Honour and Glory at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt*: and in *Chap.* 4. 13. St. *Peter* ſays to the tryed and ſuffering Chriſtians, *Rejoyce in as much as ye are Partakers of Chriſt's Sufferings, that when his Glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding Joy.* Now that the *appearing of Chriſt*, Chap. 1. 7. and his *revealed Glory*, Chap. 4. 13. do mean his final coming to reward his People, is ſufficiently evident from the Places themſelves; but yet the Matter is more evident from Chap. 5. 4. *And when the chief Shepherd*

ſhall

ſhall appear, ye ſhall receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away. As *this* muſt be the final, and moſt glorious appearing of Chriſt; ſo *Chap.* 4. 13. and *Chap.* 1. 7. ought to be underſtood of the ſame *Appearing.* The Apoſtle having mentioned in *Chap.* 1. 7. *that Appearing* of Jeſus Chriſt, which would bring *Praiſe, Honour, and Glory* to Chriſtians: He proceeds, in *ver.* 8, 9. to put them in Mind of their truly Chriſtian Temper towards Jeſus Chriſt, while he was abſent from them; *Whom having not ſeen ye love, in whom, though now ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye rejoyce with Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory, receiving the End of your Faith, the Salvation of your Souls.*

It follows, in *ver.* 10. *Of which Salvation the Prophets have enquired:* Now the Apoſtle begins his *Proof*; but what did he intend to *prove*? It is expreſly ſaid to be *Salvation*, ver. 10. and the *Salvation of their Souls*, ver. 9. the *Salvation ready*, or prepared *to be revealed in the laſt Time*, ver. 5. the *Inheritance reſerved in Heaven*, ver. 4. to the *lively Hope*, of which Salvation, or Inheritance, Chriſtians were begotten, *ver.* 3. In ſhort, theſe Converts, to the Chriſtian Religion, did believe the gracious Doctrine of the Goſpel, concerning an heavenly Bleſſedneſs, and the joyful Hope of that Bleſſedneſs was rais'd

in them by the Goſpel; and this being their Caſe, St. *Peter* writes to them to confirm their Faith, and maintain their Hope, by ſhewing them the Evidence of *that Doctrine*, upon which their Faith and Hope were built.

And the Apoſtle does produce two Arguments in proof of the gracious Doctrine of the Goſpel. (1.) *The Prophets propheſied of the Grace that ſhould come to you*, ver. 10. and their Prophecy may be depended on, for it was the *Spirit of Chriſt in them, that teſtified before Hand the Sufferings of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhould follow*, ver. 11. The Word *Grace* does well expreſs the Nature of the Goſpel Doctrine; and the *Sufferings of Chriſt*, and the *Glory that ſhould follow*, are principal Parts of that Doctrine. (2.) The other Proof of the Chriſtian Doctrine is in *ver.* 12. and it ſtands thus; *The Things which the Prophets did miniſter, are now reported by them, that have preached the Goſpel to you with the Holy Ghoſt, ſent down from Heaven.* Here we ſee, that there is an *Harmony* in Doctrine, between the Prophets in the Old Teſtament, and the Apoſtles in the New; what was *propheſied* by the Former, was alſo *reported* by the Latter. And farther, that as the Prophets teſtified before Hand by the *Spirit of Chriſt in them*; ſo the Apoſtles preached the Goſpel *with*,

or

or by *the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from Heaven.*

And *what* can we reaſonably ſuppoſe from this Account of Things was *intended to be proved*, but the *Chriſtian Doctrine*: And in reſpect to *This*, we muſt underſtand what is ſaid juſt in the Cloſe of this 1 *Ep. Chap.* 5. 12. *I have written briefly, teſtifying, that this is the true Grace of God, wherein ye ſtand*: here the *principal Deſign* of the Epiſtle opens its ſelf; and it appears to be this very material Thing, the aſſuring of Chriſtians, that the gracious Doctrine of the Goſpel, now profeſſed by them, is *true* upon the Authority of the aforementioned *Prophets*, and *Apoſtles*, who were moved and guided by the Spirit of Truth.

And upon a View of the Whole, muſt not the Dean give me leave to wonder, that he ſhould affirm, it was moſt remote from the Intention of St. *Peter*, to prove the Truth of the Goſpel in his Epiſtles?

But I proceed to the ſecond Epiſtle, that we may ſee, how the Caſe ſtands there. And in *Chap.* 1. 3, 4. the Apoſtle ſhews Chriſtians, their happy Condition, in that the *Divine Power gives them all Things, that pertain to Life and Godlineſs*: And

that *exceeding great and precious Promiſes are given to them:* —— Hereupon he exhorts them to perfect themſelves in all Parts of the Chriſtian Temper and Practice, *ver.* 5, 6, 7. *giving all Diligence, add to your Faith, Vertue*—— and then, in *ver.* 8, 9, 10, 11. St. *Peter* propoſes what Advantage would ariſe to them thereby: The laſt and beſt Advantage, is thus expreſt; *For ſo an Entrance ſhall be miniſtred to you abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* How very plain is it, that from *ver.* 3 —— 11. the Apoſtle is ſpeaking of the Chriſtian Doctrine, in reſpect to the Favours confer'd by it, the Promiſes contain'd in it, the Compliance of Chriſtians with its practical Rules, and the bleſſed Iſſue of Things, at laſt, to the practical Chriſtian. And ſeeing the Goſpel is a Doctrine of ſuch Importance, it is very fitting, that Men, converted to it, ſhould be well confirmed in it; and to confirm theſe Believers in the Chriſtian Doctrine is the Buſineſs of what follows in this Chapter; for, in *ver.* 12. St. *Peter* ſays, *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in Remembrance of theſe Things, though you know them, and be eſtabliſhed in the preſent Truth:* If the preceding Verſes contain the Things of the Goſpel, ſo does this. He adds, *ver.* 13, 14. *Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this Tabernacle,*

to ſtir you up, by putting you in Remembrance, knowing, that ſhortly I muſt put off this my Tabernacle —— And ſo concern'd he was about their conſtant Eſtabliſhment in Chriſtianity, that he farther ſays, *ver.* 15. *Moreover I will endeavour, that you may be able, after my Deceaſe, to have theſe Things always in Remembrance.* So much I think is plain, that St. *Peter* ſpeaks of the Things of the Goſpel, from *ver.* 3——11. and then from this Verſe, to the 15th he ſhews a great Concern, that theſe Converts to the Chriſtan Religion might be ever eſtabliſhed in it.

And therefore, as in the firſt Epiſtle, St. *Peter* laid before them the *Evidence* of the Chriſtian Doctrine, ſo he will now do it again; and does introduce that Evidence with this proper Declaration, *we have not followed cunningly devis'd Fables*, ver. 16. And as to his Evidence, or Proof, 'tis much the ſame as before; for there is the *Report* of the Apoſtles, *ver.* 16, 17, 18. and the *Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19, 20, 21. Of this Proof I ſhall have Occaſion to ſpeak afterwards. But we may obſerve, that 'tis brought in again, *Chap.* 3. 1, 2. *This ſecond Epiſtle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which, I ſtir up your pure Minds by way of Remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the Words, which were ſpoken before*

before by the holy Prophets, and of the Commandment of us, the Apoſtles of the Lord and Saviour. St. *Peter* here excites Believers to adhere unto the Chriſtian Doctrine, becauſe it was derived from the holy Prophets, and ſettled by apoſtolick Authority. And as in the Cloſe of his firſt Epiſtle, he ſays, *This is the true Grace of God, wherein ye ſtand:* So in the Cloſe of this, he exhorts them, *To grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: To him be Glory, both now and for ever,* Amen. To *grow in Grace,* is to underſtand the Goſpel better, as to its Doctrines, and the Evidence thereof; and to comply farther with all its practical Rules.

I hope it fully appears, that the Thing intended, by the Apoſtle, to be proved, is the *Goſpel*; though the Dean thought fit to deny it.

I'll now conſider what this learned Writer ſays was the *Thing intended to be proved,* and what *Evidence* he ſupports his Opinion by.

And according to his Account, the Thing intended to be proved by St. *Peter,* was a *certain Deliverance near at Hand,* Page 16. and this certain Deliverance would come to

paſs

paſs by the *ſignal Deſtruction of* Jeruſalem *to be openly diſplayed within a few Years*, Page 20. but I'll tranſcribe this whole Paſſage; *You now ſee, what is the Main, the only great Point in this ſecond Epiſtle; it is the Coming of Chriſt in Power and Glory to deliver the Faithful, and to take Vengeance of the Ungodly and Unbelievers, as foretold by the Prophets under both Teſtaments: The firſt Scene of which, was (as the Apoſtles gave them Aſſurance it ſhould be) within few Years openly diſplayed in the ſignal Deſtruction of* Jeruſalem; *but even this firſt Scene was future and to come, when St.* Peter *wrote, and depended intirely (as to any Knowledge that could be had of it) upon the Authority of Prophecy.* So that *a certain Deliverance, near at Hand, by the ſignal Deſtruction of* Jeruſalem, *within a few Years*, is the Thing intended to be proved by St. *Peter* in his Epiſtles, if the Dean be in the right.

It is allowed, that this Particular and great Event is propheſied of in the Old Teſtament, or New, or both: but the Queſtion is, whether it be the *main, the only great Point* intended to be proved in the Epiſtles of St. *Peter*, with any farther temporal Deliverance: It is Evidence and Proof muſt determine this Point.

And

And therefore I'll repreſent the Dean's Proof in the Caſe before us: He begins it, Page 15. with obſerving, that St. *Peter* writes to Chriſtians as then ſuffering—— *they were for a Seaſon in Heavineſs*, 1 Ep. 1. 6. with more to the ſame Purpoſe. Then the Dean obſerves farther, that St. *Peter joins the Aſſurance of a certain Deliverance near at Hand*; for *they were kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation, ready to be revealed*, Chap. 1. 5. and *their Trial would yield Honour and Glory at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt*, ver. 7. and they are bid to have *Hope in the Grace to be brought at the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*, ver. 13. and *when his Glory ſhould be revealed, they would be glad with exceeding Joy*, Chap. 4. 13. The Dean propoſes this farther Proof, That St. *Peter* has an evident Reference to the Predictions of our Saviour, in the Goſpels, about the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*: And laſtly, that the great Defection from Religion, mentioned in the ſecond Epiſtle, came to paſs; becauſe our Lord did not come ſooner to deſtroy the *Jewiſh* Nation, and thereby to deliver the Faithful.

But it appears very probable to me, that this great Defection from Chriſtianity did ariſe from other Cauſes; ſuch as a Contrariety

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in the Temper of thoſe vicious Perſons, to the Purity and Spirituality of the Goſpel; and conſequently they were diſſatisfied with Chriſtianity, becauſe its Rewards belonged to another World; and from this Diſſatisfaction, and by this Prejudice *Doubts* might firſt ariſe, and then a *Disbelief* of any ſuch future State; and under this *Disbelief*, they ſcoff, ſaying, *Where is the Promiſe of his Coming?* 2 Ep. 3. 3, 4. I take this to be a more likely Account of their Fall, than that they *grew ſick* of Chriſtianity, becauſe *Jeruſalem* was not preſently deſtroyed, and the Faithful thereby deliver'd: and in this Caſe I appeal to ſuch as read the Epiſtle with Care, and without an Hypotheſis to be ſupported.

And as for the ſuppoſed *Reference* in theſe Epiſtles to the Predictions in the Goſpels, it being only a general Remark, without any Inſtances from the Epiſtles and Goſpels to ſupport it, I will paſs it by.

What is more material to be conſidered, is, the Paſſages of Scripture which are produced as Evidence of what is intended to be proved. We muſt remember, that the Thing intended to be proved, according to the Dean, is *a certain Deliverance, near at Hand, by the Deſtruction of* Jeruſalem, *within a few Years*: The Paſſages in Proof of this, are

before ſet down, and I am ſatisfied, if that in 1 *Ep.* 1. 5. ſhould fail the Dean, the reſt will not help him. He repeats it again and again, as what he depends on in Point of Proof: Now the Verſe in St. *Peter* is thus; *Who are kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt Time.* Our Author, for *ſome Reaſon*, ends the Verſe, in his Quotation, at the Word *revealed*, and ſo leaves out; *in the laſt Time.*

And here I have three Remarks to offer. (1.) If this 5th Verſe be taken in Connexion with Verſe 3, 4. of that Chapter; and ſurely it ought to be ſo taken; then the *Salvation* in it plainly belongs to Heaven, and does not mean any *temporal Deliverance near at Hand*, or farther off. (2.) Why did the Dean ſtop at the Word *revealed?* was it not to make the Place look the more favourable to his Purpoſe? For Salvation to be revealed *in the laſt Time*, and a Deliverance *near at Hand*, would not ſo eaſily be taken to mean the *ſame Thing*, and we have the Judgment of Dr. *Whitly*, that *the laſt Time*, in this Place, ſignifies the end of the World. (3.) Why does the Dean give a wrong, or unuſual Turn to the Word *ready* (ἑτοίμος) which in the Senſe of St. *Peter* ſignifies *prepared*; but in the Senſe of the Dean, it means *near?* Now there is a great

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Difference between being *prepared to be revealed*, and being *near to be revealed*; and it ſeems to me, that *near* to be revealed *in the laſt Time*, is not the beſt Senſe.

But if this, or the reſt of the Dean's Proof, which hath much the ſame Propriety and Strength, can find Acceptance among Men, they muſt believe, that the *main, the only great Point*, intended to be proved in the Epiſtles of St. *Peter*, is a *Deliverance near at Hand, when* Jeruſalem *ſhould be deſtroyed within a few Years*, with any farther temporal Deliverance. And I ſubmit it to the Reader's Judgment, whether I have not offered better Proof, that the main great Point, intended to be proved, is the *Chriſtian Doctrine*.

However, we are told, that 'tis this *Key*, i. e. a *Deliverance near at Hand, will open the perplexed Paſſage*, 2 Pet. 1. 16——19. See Page 22. And the *Key* is firſt applied by the Dean, to theſe Words, the *Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, in ver. 16. *'Tis evident*, ſays he, *that the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, is the only Point here in Queſtion; not a Word is there relating to any other Fact, or Doctrine of the Goſpel*: And if we would know what this *Power and Coming of our Lord* does mean, the *Key* muſt open it for

us, it is his Coming with Power to deſtroy the *Jewiſh* Nation, and thereby deliver the Faithful; or in the Dean's Words, Page 23. *The ſpeedy Return of Chriſt in Power and Glory to deliver his Servants, and to take Vengeance of his Foes*, i. e. the *Jews*.

And here we muſt *carefully obſerve*, that according to the Dean, and according to *Truth*, *the Power and Coming of our Lord* is the ſame Thing with his *Appearing*, 1 Ep. 1. 7. when *Praiſe*, *Honour*, *and Glory* would be conferred on Chriſtians: And again, *the Power and Coming of our Lord*, is the ſame Thing with *the Glory of Chriſt being revealed*, Chap. 4. 13. when Chriſtians ſhould be *glad with exceeding Joy*. That theſe Paſſages ſignify the *ſame Thing*, is plain; but ſurely they do not expreſs that Event of Providence, the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Nation, and the Deliverance of the Faithful thereby. The Dean, by referring thoſe Paſſages to that Event, would tempt one to think, that it was a Chriſtian Army, with Jeſus Chriſt at the Head of them, as their General, revealed in Power and Glory, who deſtroyed the Jewiſh Nation; and (as is uſual on great Victories obtain'd) *Praiſe*, *Honour*, *and Glory* were now conferred on the Chriſtian Soldiers; and hereupon they were *glad, with exceeding Joy*. But ſeeing it was an Heathen Army, with an Hea-

then

then General at their Head, who deſtroyed the Jewiſh Nation; I cannot underſtand, that thereby, and at this Time, *Praiſe, Honour, and Glory* were conferred on Chriſtians; or that they were *glad, with exceeding Joy*, upon this Occaſion. Some Views of this terrible Caſe muſt give Perſons of a benevolent Temper (and ſuch Chriſtians are) a very ſenſible Grief; but ſome other Views would indeed adminiſter to the Comfort of Chriſtians, and one is, that an End was put to the perſecuting Power of the *Jews* againſt Chriſtians; but ſurely this could not make them *glad, with exceeding Joy*, who ſo well knew, that if ſome Sufferings were over, others would ariſe: and that there was yet a dreadfully great perſecuting Power in being, and in the Hands of Pagans.

I ſuppoſe, it is very evident, that *Praiſe, Honour, and Glory* were not conferred on Chriſtians, when *Jeruſalem* was deſtroyed; nor were they then *glad with exceeding Joy*; from whence it follows, that the *Power and Coming of our Lord*, muſt not be referr'd to that Event of Providence; the Dean himſelf being Judge. And yet he ſeems to be pretty ſure, that the *Power and Coming of our Lord* muſt belong to that Work of Providence; but ſo great a Divine knows very well, that ſuch Expreſſions as *the Power and Coming of our Lord, his Return in Power and Glory*,

his Appearing, his Glory being revealed, do much better ſuit the *final Judgment* than the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Nation: And St. *Peter*'s Argument requires, that the *Power and coming of our Lord,* ſhould, in this Place, be referr'd to the final Judgment, which thus appears. The Apoſtle had been exhorting Chriſtians to perfect themſelves in all the Temper and Practice of the Goſpel, and to incourage them therein, he ſays, *ver.* 11. *For ſo an Entrance ſhall be miniſtred to you abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt:* but ſuch as had not received the Goſpel, or deſerted it, would be ready to ſay, that all Accounts of this *everlaſting Kingdom,* where holy Men ſhall be rewarded, are only invented Stories; and therefore, in Oppoſition to this Reproach of the Goſpel, St. *Peter* declares, *ver.* 16. *We have not follow'd cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,* i. e. *his final Coming in Power and Glory,* to give all his People an Entrance into his everlaſting Kingdom; and ſo *ver.* 11. and 16. do very fitly connect together, whereby we ſee, that the *Power and Coming* of our Lord ſhould not be referr'd to the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Nation, but to the final Judgment of the World, which is a principal Branch of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and a ſpecial Point to be proved in theſe Epiſtles.

But

But ſuppoſing the Thing intended to be proved, was a *certain Deliverance near at Hand*, expreſt by the Power and Coming of our Lord; I'll now conſider, how the Dean repreſents the *Proof* given by St. *Peter*, in reſpect to that *Deliverance*; and his Account of the *Proof* ſeems pretty odd to me; it begins Page 23. in theſe Words, *To prove this Point, the Apoſtle tells them, he had been an Eye-witneſs of the Majeſty of Chriſt.* So then the Dean looks on the glorious Transfiguration of Jeſus Chriſt, as *one Proof* of the ſuppoſed *Deliverance*; but then he ſhews, how much an *Objector* might ſay againſt the firſt Proof, or Argument; for Inſtance, *Will your ſeeing him in Glory on the Mount ſome Years ago, neceſſarily infer, that he ſhall come in Glory ſome Years hence, and that too to execute the very Purpoſes, you declare? Can any Certainty, as to future Events, be collected from paſt Events?* To this Objection the Dean makes St. *Peter* anſwer, Page 24. *'Tis true, all future Events are in the Hands of God, and from him only can they certainly be learned. All other Arguments, in this Caſe, can amount only to Probabilities, and Preſumptions, and a great Preſumption 'tis, that Chriſt ſhall come in Glory, that we have already ſeen him glorified; and there can be no Doubt of his Power to deliver his Servants; ſince*

God

God hath openly declared him to be his well beloved Son: But to assure us, that he will indeed so come, and so use his Power, we have a more sure Word of Prophecy. Here is a weak Answer against a strong Objection, put into the Mouth of an Apostle; 'tis as if he had said, I must own, I have used an Argument that is very far from concluding the Point to be proved: My Argument should have proved, that a *Deliverance will shortly come to pass*; but indeed it only proves the *Probability* of such a Deliverance by the Discovery of the *Power of Christ* to work it; but still 'tis but a *Presumption*, whether that Event will ever come to pass: However, to make amends, I add another Argument, or Proof, it is the *Word of Prophecy*, which is so excellent an Argument, that it is *more sure*, it hath more Strength and Evidence than the *Former*, which had next to none at all: So *deficient* is the Apostle's Proof made, by mistaking the Point to be proved. Nay, what was *seen* and *heard* at the Transfiguration of Christ, can be no Proof at all, of the *Deliverance near at Hand*, because we are told, that *it depended intirely upon Prophecy, as to any Knowledge that could be had of it*, Page 20. and if the Case be indeed so, then where are the *two Proofs* of the supposed Deliverance; and where is the *Comparison* between them?

But

But now let us ſuppoſe, that St. *Peter* intended to prove the *Chriſtian Doctrine*, and we ſhall ſee, that he reaſoned very well in his *firſt Proof*, which in the Dean's Way of Interpretation, appeared very weak. And to prove this Point, the *Chriſtian Doctrine*, the Apoſtle tells them, *We were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty*, ver. 16. the Cloſe, *for he received from God the Father, Honour and Glory, when there came ſuch a Voice to him from the excellent Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed*, ver. 18. and *This Voice, which came from Heaven, we heard when we were with him in the holy Mount*, ver 18. Here is a direct and ſtrong Proof of the Chriſtian Doctrine; for as much as the Apoſtles ſaw, and heard, how certainly and eminently God the Father had own'd and approved of Jeſus Chriſt, who is the Author and Finiſher of our Faith; they ſaw how God the Father had put a viſible, ſurpriſing, and miraculous Glory upon him, and with what Majeſty and Glory he ſhould come to judge the World. The Apoſtle's Argument is this; *God the Father evidently owned and approved of Jeſus Chriſt, and put a very great Glory upon him*, at the Transfiguration; the Inference is, *therefore the Chriſtian Doctrine is true* in this, or that, and every Branch of it. How clear, how neceſſary is this Inference,

how well does the Apoſtle *prove his Point*, ſuppoſing it to be the *Chriſtian Doctrine*.

A Miſtake in the Dean, of the Point to be proved, has deſtroyed, or greatly weaken'd the Apoſtle's firſt Proof, in *ver.* 16, 17, 18. And the ſame Miſtake leads him to give a wrong Account of the *more ſure Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19. which is his Text: The Dean would have this *Word of Prophecy* be a Proof of the *certain Deliverance near at Hand*; but if this is not the Point to be proved, then *the Word of Prophecy* muſt be otherwiſe underſtood. To me, the plain Truth is, that the *Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19. agrees with Chap. 3. 1, 2. and 1 *Ep.* 1. 10, 11, 12. in proving the certain Truth of the Chriſtian Doctrine. But this learned Writer hath ſo much miſtook the Thing intended to be proved in theſe Epiſtles, and hath conſequently given ſuch a wrong Turn to his Text and Context, that he might have forborn to ſay, *This Account of St.* Peter's *Epiſtles, is indeed, not mine, but his own*, Page 21. And again, *This Interpretation, as it is eaſy and natural in its ſelf, and renders to every Expreſſion in the Text its natural and uſual Signification; ſo is it neceſſary, I conceive, to the Apoſtle's Argument, and plainly inforced by the Context, and ſtands clear of all Difficulties*, Page 25.

It may be, this learned and reverend Dean will think, that I have been too free with him, and have given ſome Offence: To this I can only ſay, that if I have offended him, it is the firſt Time, and I was compelled to it by the Love of *ſacred Truth*. I was much pleaſed with his truly Chriſtian Expreſſions in the Cloſe of his Diſcourſes, *I conceived it ſeaſonable —— to throw in one Mite, as an Offering to the Love of Chriſt, and his Goſpel, in which I hope to live and to die*: And with the ſame Thought and Temper I write this Paper.

There is a Third learned Writer, who hath lately publiſhed his Account of the *more ſure Word of Prophecy*, 2 Pet. 1. 19. in his *Miſcellanea Sacra*.

This judicious Perſon excepts againſt the Dean's Interpretation, in a Number of Queries propos'd to him; in reading which, I have been inſtructed, and am therefore obliged to the Author; but how the Dean can anſwer the moſt of them, I do not underſtand; this muſt be left to him. My Buſineſs is to ſhew, that this ingenious Writer's own Interpretation is not above Exception: His *laudable Deſign*, with the learned Biſhop and Dean, is to ſet the *more ſure Word of Prophecy* free from the Objection raiſed by

the Author of the *Grounds and Reaſons*: but his Way of explaining the *more ſure Word of Prophecy*, is almoſt intirely his own; and I ſhould have been proud of being able to congratulate him upon his Diſcovery: However, I take this Occaſion of paying him my high Reſpect, and hearty Thanks for the great Pains he has taken, and the good Service he hath done in the Cauſe of Chriſtianity.

This excellent Author takes the *Word of Prophecy*, 2 Pet. 1. 19. to be wholly *New Teſtament Prophecy*; and I ſuppoſe it to be altogether *Old Teſtament Prophecy*, ſo great is our Difference about this Paſſage.

And by the *Word of Prophecy*, he underſtands the whole Gift of Inſpiration, in ſetting forth the Chriſtian Doctrine, and foretelling future and great Events; or in his own Expreſſions, *the Word of Prophecy* is the *Word of Wiſdom, Knowledge, and Prophecy*, Page 105.

But this Author has not brought any Proof from the Epiſtles of St. *Peter* to juſtify his Opinion of the *Word of Prophecy*: It may be, that a very careful Examination of both Epiſtles would have given his Thoughts another Turn; yet in Favour of his Account, he ſpeaks thus, *This Senſe of the Place*

makes

makes the Apoſtle's Reaſoning appear very pertinent and ſtrong, and agreeable to the Strain of the New Teſtament; whereas, if the Senſe of it be, what has been generally given it, referring to Old Teſtament Prophecy, I can't underſtand the Apoſtle's Reaſoning, or ſee how it is ſubſervient to his Purpoſe, or ſuited to the Diſpenſation of the Spirit; nor can I ſee how to obviate that unhappy Uſe, that has been made of it, and to which, I think, the common Interpretation pretty naturally leads.

Now if all this be indeed ſo, one would wiſh, that his Senſe of the Place was true: but I think there is evident Proof in the Epiſtles of St. *Peter*, that *the Word of Prophecy* ought to be referred to the Old Teſtament. And to clear up this, I'll review ſome Placles ſpoken to in my Remarks on the Dean; and I'll begin with that Paſſage, 2 *Ep.* 3. 1, 2. *This ſecond Epiſtle, Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which, I ſtir up your pure Minds by Way of Remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the Words which were ſpoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the Commandment of us, the Apoſtles of the Lord and Saviour:* As St. *Peter* was the Author of both Epiſtles, ſo he had the ſame View in both, he did the ſame Thing in both, *i. e.* he did excite theſe Chriſtians to remember, and be mindful of the Chriſtian

ſtian Doctrine: And that they might look on it, as fit to be minded, he ſhews it to be a Doctrine ſupported by divine Authority, in that it was *ſpoken before by the holy Prophets*, and was alſo the *Commandment of the Apoſtles of the Lord and Saviour*. Here are two diſtinct Proofs of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and one is plainly the *Word of Prophecy* in the Old Teſtament. I'll now go to the firſt Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, and in Chap. 1. 10, 11. the Old Teſtament Prophets are ſpoken of very expreſly, as having propheſied of the Goſpel, or Chriſtian Doctrine, and they did ſo by the Spirit of Chriſt in them; and then in *ver.* 12. we find that the ſame Doctrine, which was propheſied of the Old Teſtament, was reported in the New by them that preached the Goſpel, by the Holy Ghoſt, ſent down from Heaven; So that here again are two diſtinct Proofs of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and one is plainly the *Word of Prophecy* in the Old Teſtament.

I come now to the diſputed Place, 2 *Pet.* 1. 16 —— 19. It is agreed, that here are two diſtinct Proofs of the Chriſtian Doctrine; but my eſteemed Author thinks, they both are purely New Teſtament Proofs; and one is, what was *ſeen*, and *heard* by the Apoſtles, at the glorious and miraculous Transfiguration of Chriſt, *ver.* 16, 17, 18. and the other is, *the more ſure Word of Prophecy*,

ver.

ver. 19. *i. e. the Word of Wiſdom, Knowledge, and Prophecy in the Apoſtles*: The learned Writer makes this latter Proof a greater Evidence of Chriſtianity, than the former, and ſo preſerves the ſuppoſed Compariſon between the two Proofs.

But if this Interpretation be right, St. *Peter* does not ſo well agree with himſelf; the Apoſtle gives us two diſtinct Proofs of the Chriſtian Doctrine, as we have ſeen, Chap. 3. 1, 2. and 1 *Ep.* 1. 10, 11, 12. and in both theſe Places, one Proof is from the Apoſtles, and is a New Teſtament Proof; but the other is moſt evidently from the Prophets, and is an Old Teſtament Proof: And is it not reaſonable to underſtand the third Place, 2 *Ep.* 1. 16——19. in Agreement with the other Two?

Then farther it appears by the Context, that the *Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19. ſhould be referred to the Old Teſtament; for to clear up the *Sureneſs* of this *Word of Prophecy*, it is ſaid, *ver.* 20, 21. *Knowing this firſt, that no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, or Suggeſtion; *for the Prophecy came not in old Time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God ſpoke, as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* The Expreſſion, *Prophecy of Scripture*, has now a *common* Reference to the Old Teſtament, and

and New; but then I ſuppoſe it had a *ſingle* Reference to the Old Teſtament; becauſe the New Teſtament Revelation had not ſo early been called and known by the Name *Scripture*. And the Reaſoning of the Apoſtle here *directly* points to the *Old Teſtament Prophecy*; St. *Peter* would prove that the Prophecy, he intended, is *ſure*; and to this End he takes his Argument from the Old Teſtament, *Holy Men of God then ſpake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*. It ſeems highly proper, that the *Prophecy*, and the *Argument of its Sureneſs*, ſhould belong to the *ſame Teſtament*; *the Old Teſtament Prophecy is ſure*, for it *was ſpoken by holy Men of God, who were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*; this Reaſon is cloſe and ſtrong: But ſee how the Matter ſtands the other Way, the *New Teſtament Prophecy is ſure*; for the Prophecy, which came in old Time, was ſpoken by holy Men of God, *&c.* This Reaſoning is not direct and cloſe.

And thus I have offered the *Grounds* of my Opinion, that ſtands in Oppoſition to the worthy Perſon I have in View, and I ſubmit them to his free, impartial, and judicious Thoughts.

The laſt Thing I have to do in this Paper, is to propoſe what appears to me the beſt Account of the diſputed Place of St. *Peter*:

I promiſe nothing *new*, or that is altogether my own; I content my ſelf with an old way of repreſenting the difficult Paſſage, becauſe I can't find a better among ſuch, as have lately ſeen the Light. The Interpretation, I prefer, is one of thoſe rejected by the Dean, and is here defended as well as I am able.

The Point intended to be proved, as I apprehend Things, is the *Chriſtian Doctrine*; and the Evidence of this is ſo very plain, that, to the beſt of my Knowledge, the learned Dean is the only Perſon, who hath thought otherwiſe.

And as the *Chriſtian Doctrine* is the Point to be proved, ſo St. *Peter* has given us *two diſtinct Proofs* of it, they ſtand together in three Places, 1 *Ep.* 1. 10, 11, 12. 2 *Ep.* 1. 16——19. and Chap. 3. 1, 2. One of theſe Proofs is taken from the holy Apoſtles, as being inſpired Men, and every way good Witneſſes of the Chriſtian Doctrine; but the other is taken from the holy Prophets, as being alſo inſpired Men, whoſe *Word of Prophecy* was therefore very *ſure*; and thus far Things are eaſy and plain to me.

But ſuppoſing it is the *Word of Old Teſtament Prophecy*, that is in 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. and ſtands there as a *Proof of Chriſtianity*; then I muſt account for two Things; one is the

ſeeming *Compariſon* between the two diſtinct Proofs, the Word of Prophecy is *more ſure*. The other is what is farther ſaid of *the Word of Prophecy*, in *ver.* 19. that it is a *Light which ſhineth in a dark Place, to which Chriſtians ſhould take heed*, &c.

As to the firſt, it is evident, that the *Compariſon* between the two Proofs, has made a very great *Difficulty*, and has led Men into various Accounts of the Place, very oppoſite to one another; and the Author of *Grounds and Reaſons* has made his *Advantage* of this appearing *Compariſon*; I would therefore remove this *Compariſon* out of the Place, if *Truth* will agree to it: and to prepare my Way, I'll obſerve, as follows.

(1.) The two diſtinct Proofs ſtand without any *Compariſon*, in 1 *Ep.* 1. 10, 11, 12. and in 2 *Ep.* 3. 1, 2.

(2.) St. *Peter*'s Argument did not require the comparing his Proofs, in 2 *Ep.* 1. 16—19. any more, than in the two other Places; and indeed, I ſee not the expediency of comparing the two Proofs, ſince both are ſo very good and ſtrong.

(3.) The ſuppoſed *Compariſon* is not favour'd by the Context, *ver.* 20, 21. Here is plainly a very good Proof, that the *Word of Pro-*

Prophecy, ver. 19. is *ſure*, or *very ſure*, or *moſt ſure*, as being above all Uncertainty; becauſe the *Prophecy was ſpoken by holy Men of God, who were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*; This is, I ſay, very good Evidence, that the Word of Prophecy is *moſt ſure and certain*. View the Argument again, and in the following Form; The Prophecy was ſpoken by holy Men of God, who were moved by the Holy Ghoſt; therefore it is *moſt ſure and certain*; this Conſequence is clear, and beyond Denial. Now let us ſee how the Matter will ſtand, if a Regard be had to the *Compariſon*; the Prophecy was ſpoken by holy Men of God, who were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, therefore it is *more ſure*, than certain Facts teſtified by other holy Men of God, the Apoſtles, who were, at leaſt, equally furniſhed and guided by the Holy Ghoſt; this Conſequence is as evidently falſe, as the former is true: So that the *Proof*, in *ver.* 20, 21. of the *ſure Word of Prophecy*, ver. 19. ſeems to reach no farther than the *Sureneſs and Certainty* of that Word of Prophecy in its ſelf.

The Caſe appears thus to me, St. *Peter* teſtifies what he had *ſeen*, and *heard*, ver. 16, 17, 18. and he offers, as a *Proof* of Chriſtianity, in this or that principal Doctrine of it, and was *ready* to ſupport that *Proof*, by all his witneſſing Powers: But he adds, There

is another Proof; it is the *Word of Prophecy*, and though it was ſpoken long ago, by Men, that are dead and gone; yet 'tis *moſt ſure*, for the Prophets, who ſpake it, *were holy Men of God, and were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*: Such, I think, is the Import of *ver.* 19, 20, 21.

But to all theſe Obſervations, it may be replyed, that *in Fact* St. *Peter* did compare his two Proofs; for he ſays, the Word of Prophecy is *more ſure*: The Anſwer to this, is, That in the *Greek* Language, the *Comparative* is uſed for the *Poſitive*, and for the *Superlative* too. Let us then ſuppoſe, that the *Comparative* is uſed for the *Superlative*, in the Place, under Conſideration; and ſo the very troubleſome *Compariſon* will be removed, and the Paſſage will remain eaſy and clear, from a very great Difficulty; as eaſy and clear, as thoſe other Places, 1 *Ep.* 1. 10, 11, 12. and 2 *Ep.* 3. 1, 2. about which, there are no ſuch Diſputes.

But the Dean ſays, *This Expoſition introduces a new Uſe of Language*, Page 11. The Queſtion is now about a Point of *Greek* Grammar, whether the *Comparative*, in that Language, may be uſed for the *Superlative*. And I have two very great Authorities on my Side; one is the learned *Glaſſius*, in his *Philologia Sacra*, where he gives ſeveral Inſtances of ſuch a Change in ſacred and profane

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Authors: The other Authority is Mr. *Blackwall*, in his ſacred Claſſicks, who alſo gives Inſtances of ſuch a Change. This Change then does not introduce a new, but is an old Uſe of Language, if thoſe great Authors are proper Judges; to whom I refer the Reader, and yet I'll tranſcribe, in Part, what they ſay.

As to *Glaſſius*, I'll mention two of the Scripture Inſtances, given by him: One is *Mat.* 11. 11. *He that is leaſt* [ὁ μικρότερος] *in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he*, i. e. than *John* Baptiſt. The Word *leaſt*, in this Paſſage, is *leſs* in the *Greek*; there is a *Comparative*, but it is uſed for a *Superlative*, and is ſo tranſlated: The other is, 1 *Cor.* 15. 19. *If in this Life only we have Hope in Chriſt, we are of all Men moſt miſerable*: [ελεεινότεροι] the *Greek* is *more miſerable*; here again the *Comparative* is uſed for the *Superlative*, and is ſo tranſlated.

And this learned Writer ſays, that ſome Perſons refer 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. to this Change of the Degrees of *Compariſon*. See *Philologia Sacra*, Page 428.

And Mr. *Blackwall* tells us, in Page 77. of his ſacred Claſſicks, that *Words of Compariſon are ſometimes ſo exchanged in ſacred Writers, that raſh Criticks have not forborn to charge them with unallowable Liberties*:

and

and one Inſtance of ſuch Exchange, produced by this Author, is a *Comparative* put for a *Superlative*, and a Place of St. *Matthew* is cited for it.

Now if it ſhould be allowed, that the *Comparative* is uſed by St. *Peter*, for the *Superlative*, and conſequently, that there is no *Compariſon* deſigned between the two Proofs, then I am got clear from my greateſt Difficulty.

But ſtill there is another, though leſs, Difficulty upon my Hand; for it may be thought, that ſome Things ſaid in *ver.* 19. will not agree to an Old Teſtament Prophecy: The whole Verſe is thus; *We have alſo a more ſure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light, that ſhineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star ariſe in your Hearts.* In reſpect to this Paſſage, the Dean hath taught me, *that metaphorical Expreſſions and Similitudes ought not to be rigidly and ſtrictly canvaſſed; 'tis ſufficient to ſee the general Import and Meaning of them*, Page 30. and with this Allowance, I proceed.

The Word of Prophecy is ſaid to be a *Light ſhining in a dark Place*; and ſuppoſing the World is that dark Place, the Thing is very true: Then it is required that Chriſtians *take heed* to this Light; and it is evident, they ought

ought to take heed to every Part of divine Revelation; and they muſt take heed to the Old Teſtament Word of Prophecy, as irradiated by them that preached the Goſpel with the Holy Ghoſt, ſent down from Heaven: Tho' a diſtinct Proof for Chriſtian Doctrine be taken from the *Prophet*, and *Apoſtle*; yet they give one Light in Religion, and to this Light Chriſtians muſt take heed, *until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star ariſe in their Hearts*, i. e. until the State of better Light comes in a better World.

This Account of the Light, which now ſhineth in a dark Place—— is not mine originally; nor do I ſay it is St. *Peter*'s; but it may be met with in many of his Commentators; and, I think, it is liable to no material Objection.

And thus I have propoſed and defended, what appears to me the beſt Account of 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. and it hath theſe two Advantages; that it agrees with all other Accounts, in fully delivering the Paſſage out of the Hands of the Author of *Grounds and Reaſons*: And that as every Account does, in my Opinion, labour under ſome Difficulty, I hope, what I have offer'd is attended with the leaſt.

F I N I S.

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